

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An exhaust pipe valve, comprising:

a housing including a cylindrical portion defining a bore;

a bearing sleeve comprising a cylindrical body mounted ~~in~~ within the bore and completely surrounded by the housing and having a primary bearing surface;

a valve spindle rotatably mounted in the bearing sleeve and having a primary sealing surface that ~~cooperates with~~ is in direct abutting engagement with the primary bearing surface of the bearing sleeve;

a valve plate mounted at the valve spindle, wherein the primary bearing surface of the bearing sleeve faces the valve plate;

a washer arranged on the valve spindle, wherein the washer cooperates with the bearing sleeve on a side of the bearing sleeve that faces away from the valve plate, the side of the bearing sleeve that faces away from the valve plate being a secondary bearing surface, and wherein the washer has a secondary sealing surface that cooperates with the secondary bearing surface; and

a spring that biases the primary sealing surface of the valve spindle against the primary bearing surface of the bearing sleeve while biasing the washer against the bearing sleeve.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the primary sealing surface, the secondary sealing surface, the primary bearing surface and the secondary bearing surface has a conical profile.

4. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the primary sealing surface and the primary bearing surface has a conical profile.

5. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, further comprising a nut mounted on the valve spindle, wherein the spring is disposed between the nut mounted on the valve spindle and the washer.

6. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 5, wherein the spring is a spring washer.

7. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the spring is made from a nickel-chromium-iron alloy.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the valve spindle is made from steel.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the valve plate is mounted centrically at the valve spindle and cooperates with an inner wall of the housing.

12. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the valve plate is mounted eccentrically at the valve spindle and cooperates with two valve seats in an interior of the housing.

13. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, further comprising a lever attached to the valve spindle for operation of the valve plate.

14. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the bearing sleeve is press-fitted into the housing.

15. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 14, wherein the housing comprises a cylindrical portion in which the bearing sleeve is fitted.

16. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the bearing sleeve is fixed in the housing in a form-locking manner.

17. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the bearing sleeve is made from steel.

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, further comprising a ceramic coating disposed on at least a portion of at least one of the valve spindle and the washer.

20. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 19, wherein the ceramic coating comprises at least one selected from the group consisting of titanium, aluminum, and chromium.

21. (Original) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 20, wherein the ceramic coating further comprises at least one of yttrium and nitrogen.

22. (Previously Presented) The exhaust pipe valve of claim 19, further comprising a second ceramic coating disposed on the ceramic coating, wherein the second ceramic coating comprises at least one selected from the group consisting of titanium, aluminum, and chromium.

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Previously Presented) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1 wherein the secondary sealing and secondary bearing surfaces have conical profiles.

25. (Previously Presented) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1 wherein the primary sealing surface and the primary bearing surface each have a conical profile that cooperate with each other to form a primary seal and wherein the secondary sealing surface and the secondary bearing surface each have a conical profile that cooperate with each other to form a secondary seal.

26. (New) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the secondary sealing surface of the washer is in direct abutting engagement with the bearing sleeve such that the bearing sleeve is sandwiched directly between the washer and the valve spindle.

27. (New) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the bearing sleeve is received within the bore at a press-fit interface which securely holds the bearing sleeve within the housing without requiring any additional securing structures.

28. (New) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the bearing sleeve comprising a sole bearing structure that supports the valve spindle.

29. (New) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the cylindrical body has a first end face that defines the primary bearing surface and a second end face opposite the first end face that defines the secondary bearing surface, and wherein the valve spindle includes a shoulder located within the bore that defines the primary sealing surface, and wherein the washer is received within the bore such that the primary sealing surface and the primary bearing surface are in direct abutting engagement with each other and the secondary sealing surface and the secondary bearing surface are in direct abutting engagement with each other within the bore.

30. (New) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 29, wherein the primary sealing surface and the primary bearing surface each have a conical profile that directly engage each other to form a primary seal and wherein the secondary sealing surface and the secondary bearing surface each have a conical profile that directly engage each other to form a secondary seal.

31. (New) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 1, wherein the bearing sleeve is defined by an overall axial length extending from a first end face to a second end face, and wherein an outer diameter of the bearing sleeve is generally constant from the first end face to the second end face.

32. (New) The exhaust pipe valve according to claim 31, wherein the cylindrical portion of the housing has a generally constant inner diameter extending from one end of the bore to an opposite end of the bore.